

Vehicle Safety and Winter Conditions

Being alert and driving defensively will prevent vehicle accidents



Did you know that vehicle driver accidents cost organizations from ten of thousands to millions of dollars per year? This figure represents property damage losses alone, but does not account for an even more important factor, which is the drivers safety.

Drivers within your fleet program can help reduce vehicle accidents, and increasing their own safety, by realizing that a little bit of caution can go a long way to preventing an accident.

This document outlines the main precautions that can be followed in order to minimize the occurrence of accidents, and increase driver safety.

Precautions include:

➤ ***Driving defensively, especially in winter conditions.***

Accidents increase in the winter, as driving conditions deteriorate; it is important to drive defensively and cautiously in these conditions.

At the end of this document are some facts on driving in winter conditions that you are encouraged to read, to increase awareness of the hazards we all face in the winter.

➤ ***Scanning your surroundings.***

A complete check of your surroundings, by scanning and using mirrors as well as a walk around the vehicle before you start driving, can decrease accidents.

Turning at Lights:

Scanning an intersection is particularly important when turning at lights; ensure that your path to turn is clear before moving across oncoming traffic lanes. Count two seconds before proceeding into an intersection in case the 'other driver' does not stop. Look again, left, centre, right before proceeding. And speaking of lights, make it a habit of always using the full lighting system on your car, headlights and tail lights.

Backing Up:

One of the most frequent accidents is backing into an object, such as a pole or fire hydrant. Using your rear view and sideview mirrors can assist with checking your surroundings prior to backing up. If the surroundings are not familiar, you might want to walk around the vehicle once to see what obstructions exist. Prior to backing, look into the spot you will be entering. Make sure there are no objects which might cause you problems. Remember it is far safer to first back into a parking position and driving out when leaving it.

➤ ***Respecting signage, yielding and stopping accordingly.***

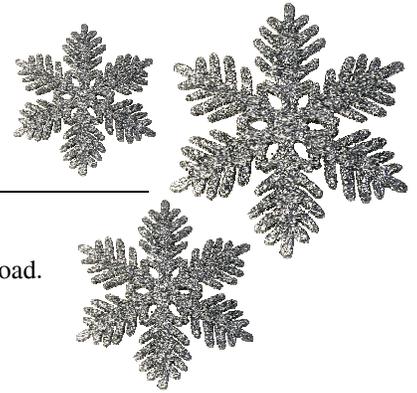
A significant number of accidents occur when a driver runs a stop sign or light, or does not yield as shown on signage. Time is rarely saved, and safety is jeopardized, by not obeying signs. When roads are wet with snow or rain it can take you up to three times the distance to stop. Increase your stopping distance by reducing your speed and being prepared to stop. Not obeying a stop sign or red light can cost you a several hundred dollar fine and demerit points on your driving record.

And remember to always wear your seat belt! Drive like your life depended upon it!

These precautions are simple, but following them will ensure you get to your destination safely.

Extreme Driving Conditions:

Snow and Ice



Extreme driving conditions demand increased driver concentration and preparation. The points below are aimed at understanding how to handle weather-related conditions on the road.

Snow

Snow causes reduced traction and limited visibility. Speed reduction and increasing following distance are important for both visibility and vehicle control purposes. Drivers should accelerate slowly when driving on snow covered roads. If the drive wheels slip, the driver should take his/her foot off of the accelerator and start the maneuver over. This will help minimize the driver's chances of skidding or losing control of the vehicle.

Steering and braking should also be done carefully and smoothly to minimize skids. A driver should also allow for an increased stopping distance and avoid tailgating. The type of snow on the road will play a part in how a driver should approach maneuvering his/her vehicle.

The use of low beam headlights can help others see your vehicle. Never use high beam headlights. They actually reduce a driver's visibility.

Ice

An icy road can be more dangerous than snow covered roads. All drivers need to watch for changes in a road surface that may affect traction. In cold weather, drivers need to be aware of black ice. What makes black ice dangerous is the fact that most drivers aren't aware of the black ice until it's too late. Black ice forms when temperatures drop around the 32-degree mark. Any moisture on the road freezes into a smooth, nearly invisible, slippery surface. On cold days when the road is wet, drivers should keep an eye on the spray thrown from other vehicles. If the spray suddenly stops, black ice may be forming.

Conditions deteriorate due to snow and ice, and you may want to anticipate situations that you need to get out of, such as a driver rear ending you, by leaving enough space to drive out of the situation.

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